



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR

BLUE CARBON

IPBC DIALOGUE

22 - 24 February 2023

Summary Report

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SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The 2023 IPBC Dialogue was held on 22-24 February 2023 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, and was co-hosted by the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (IPBC Coordinator), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO (IPBC Coordinator Support) and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. Around 80 participants from 21 countries attended the Dialogue either in-person or virtually.

The IPBC Dialogue is an opportunity for all Partners to connect, exchange and contribute to collectively shaping the Partnership's activities.

The Dialogue was structured around thematic sessions corresponding to the three strategic Goals of the Partnership:

- 1) Increased international commitments to protect coastal blue carbon ecosystems (mangroves, seagrasses and tidal/salt marshes).
- 2) Improved national policies to conserve, protect and restore coastal blue carbon ecosystems.
- 3) Accelerated on-the-ground implementation of blue carbon conservation, protection, and restoration activities.

The sections below highlight key discussion points brought up by the audience and panellists.

Science as a driver for blue carbon action at all levels

Over the last decade, blue carbon science has made significant progress, although important gaps remain, e.g., related to the mapping of seagrass, to emerging coastal blue carbon ecosystems (seaweed), as well as to a better integration with social sciences.

Experts agree that both restoration and conservation, especially at scale, still pose challenges in terms of financial and human resources needed, as well as technical capacity. Still, experts also agree that, wherever possible, [conservation should be preferred over restoration](#), which comes with additional challenges, for example, related to survival rates. However, the current organisation of the carbon markets makes restoration projects more appealing than conservation projects to funders – a concern that should be addressed by the blue carbon community.

Existing mechanisms such as the [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#), [UNESCO Biosphere Reserves](#), [Ramsar sites](#) and [National Marine Protected Areas](#) offer important opportunities for [conservation, restoration and sustainable management of coastal blue carbon ecosystems](#). For example, 78% of total mangrove area in Seychelles are part of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Blue carbon is a very good example of how science and policy can make progress by mutually informing and supporting each other. Early blue carbon science – driven mainly by the Blue Carbon Initiative – has been crucial to integrating these ecosystems in national and international policymaking on climate change mitigation, whilst national and international policy processes play a key role in creating the enabling conditions for science to advance and be able to respond to

societal needs. Going beyond the more traditional way of doing science to fully capture the multiple dimensions of sustainable development is one of the main goals of the recently launched [Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon \(GO-BC\)](#), of which the IPBC is a partner.

IPBC Goal 1: Blue carbon in the international arena

Especially after the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, efforts by the wider blue carbon community of practitioners, coupled with leadership from a group of countries have led to increased integration of coastal blue carbon ecosystems into national climate mitigation strategies, including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement, [with 61 countries including at least one coastal blue carbon ecosystem in their new or updated NDC as of October 2021](#).

More recently, the blue carbon community started to consider [the wide range of ecosystem services provided by healthy coastal blue carbon ecosystems besides carbon sequestration](#), especially when carbon sequestration and storage may be secondary to the contribution to biodiversity, coastal resilience, and livelihoods of coastal communities, among others.

In order to account for this increased attention to the wide range of ecosystem services provided by coastal blue carbon ecosystems, [the IPBC has recently attempted to compile a list of the main international frameworks that are either directly or indirectly relevant to the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of coastal blue carbon ecosystems](#), including the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and associated instruments, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the World Heritage Convention, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the United Nations Decades on Ecosystem Restoration and of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

Scaling up blue carbon ambition

International commitments to blue carbon can take several forms. With a view to step up ambition globally and ensure that commitments to blue carbon made in international fora translate into action on-the-ground, the IPBC has launched a [High Level Ambition Group \(HILAG\)](#) at the Dialogue. The HILAG was initially conceived as an initiative of France and Conservation International at the One Ocean Summit in Brest in 2022, which will now be an integral part of the IPBC and jointly coordinated by France and the IPBC Coordinator Team (Australia and IOC/UNESCO).

Current country members of the HILAG are [France](#), [Australia](#), [Costa Rica](#) and [Monaco](#).

All IPBC Partners are invited to consider joining the HILAG, by expressing their interest to the IPBC Coordinator Team (further information is provided below). After the expressions of interest are received, more details on next steps will be provided.

All IPBC Partners are also invited to provide their written inputs to the draft HILAG Vision and Roadmap document (version 22.02.2023, attached to the present report). Discussions at the Dialogue already touched upon a few key aspects of this new group, including:

- Process on how to join the HILAG.
- Definition of ambition.

- Inclusion of local communities, youth, gender, and indigenous people in the narrative.
- Establishment of a tracking process for ambition and new commitments.

The written commitments made by the first HILAG members will be shared soon as a reference.

IPBC Goal 2: Translating international commitments into national blue carbon policies, regulations and management plans

Countries expressed their concerns over the overwhelming amount of international reporting mechanisms, and [the need to synergise policies at the national level, for example, climate and biodiversity strategies](#) (Australia, Indonesia, United Kingdom). The [Blue Carbon Policy Framework](#) developed by Conservation International and IUCN with contributions from several IPBC Partners is intended to provide a first set of recommendations for countries on how to streamline national blue carbon action.

Oftentimes, challenges also reside in the national policy environment. Better coordination at the national level might require as a first step getting several different ministries to the table and allow them to talk to each other and [overcome inter-ministerial conflict](#), especially with the fisheries departments (examples brought by the Commonwealth Blue Charter's experience in Sri Lanka, but also by the Mangrove Action Project, and Seychelles).

Lack of (or gaps in) capacity at the national level can undermine the actual implementation of countries' international commitments – [the compilation of a national greenhouse gas inventory including wetlands being one of the main challenges encountered by most countries](#). In countries like Madagascar, additional work is needed to [overcome public regulation obstacles](#), e.g., secure tenure of the management area. The IPBC offers countries a platform to exchange best practices, learn from the experience of other countries, and access expertise from the wider blue carbon community.

In sharing their own experience, country representatives also underlined the importance of [adopting a jurisdictional approach and of involving indigenous and local communities](#) in the design of both national policies and on-the-ground activities. A participatory approach was adopted by Costa Rica for their recent national blue carbon strategy. In countries like Indonesia, Madagascar, and Seychelles, community-level activities including food security, health and gender components in addition to conservation and restoration have proven key to having the support of local communities for wider conservation activities.

Grounding action into the national and local context also ensures that capacity that is generated locally, or nationally, does not migrate elsewhere.

IPBC Goal 3: Implementation of blue carbon activities

Following the presentation of lessons learnt from different blue carbon conservation and restoration projects internationally, Partners agreed there is a general need to build capacity, including across a range of actors (policy makers, project developers) and areas (project setup, restoration methods, governance, data collection, analysis and storage, science base); in-country capacity; and that capacity building should look at both guidance materials and training.

Facilitating access to funding and setting standards

[Access to funding](#) was widely recognized as one of the biggest challenges to accelerated on-the-ground implementation of blue carbon conservation, protection, and restoration activities (IPBC Goal 3).

Several finance instruments have been used to fund blue carbon activities, including grants, carbon credits, blue bonds (Seychelles), Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), microfinance (for mangrove forests). Especially for funding at scale, it will be key for countries to be able to attract [private funding](#).

However, at a time where blue carbon credits are seen as the silver bullet, all participants agreed on the need to provide countries, project developers, and finance providers with clear guidance on how to [ensure that finance is directed towards high-quality projects](#). A group of organisations (Conservation International, Friends of Ocean Action, World Economic Forum, ORRAA, Salesforce, The Nature Conservancy, and the Meridian Institute) have recently compiled a list of [principles for high-quality blue carbon projects](#), to which several IPBC Partners contributed. Next steps in the process will include the strengthening of the local and indigenous communities' component into the principles and guidance, as well as their wide dissemination and adoption by the blue carbon community.

In order to achieve integrity and fairness in the voluntary carbon markets, national governments have a key role to play in establishing rules and standards – for example, Papua New Guinea declared a moratorium on blue carbon projects for carbon credits until a regulated market is in place. Countries should also ensure that national legislation is clear about [carbon rights](#) (concern raised by Blue Ventures following their experience in Madagascar).

In response to the concerns over effectiveness of carbon credits in the voluntary market raised by a recent journalistic investigation, participants agreed that this could be taken by the blue carbon community as an opportunity to clarify the integrity and high-quality of this sector.

On finance, country representatives also expressed a need to ensure that funding is not only used for actions on-the-ground, but also to [build institutional capacity](#).

ACTION ITEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERS AND IPBC COORDINATOR

Science

- Opportunity for all IPBC Partners to co-design the activities of [GO-BC](#), for blue carbon science to respond to their needs, including promoting research on emerging blue carbon ecosystems.
- Opportunity for GO-BC to address the issue of comparability and accessibility of data.
- Opportunity for GO-BC to build capacity at the regional level, by working together with IPBC Partners active at the regional level (PEMSEA, SPREP, IORA Blue Carbon Hub).
- Opportunity for GO-BC to create a mechanism to assess progress of IPBC Partners' restoration activities.

High Level Ambition Group (HILAG) and international commitments

- All IPBC Partners are invited to consider joining the HILAG, by expressing their interest to the group's coordinators. Please address your request to the IPBC Coordinator at ipbc@dcceew.gov.au and e.bonotto@unesco.org
- All IPBC Partners are also invited to provide their written inputs to the Vision and Roadmap document of the HILAG (attached to the present report). Please submit your inputs to e.bonotto@unesco.org by 2 May 2023. The written commitments made by the first HILAG members will be shared soon as a reference.
- All IPBC Partners to work together to keep momentum at key next international events: Ocean and Climate Dialogue 2023, UNFCCC COP28, Mangrove Breakthrough, Global Stocktake, CBD COP16, UNOC 2025.

Knowledge exchange and technical guidance

- IPBC Coordinator to coordinate development and dissemination of guidance on blue carbon finance and private sector engagement.
- Based on ongoing efforts, IPBC Coordinator in consultation with interested Partners to continue to provide guidance to IPBC Country Partners on how to best align national efforts on blue carbon.
- All Partners to engage in the further development and dissemination of the High-Quality Blue Carbon Principles and Guidance.
- IPBC Coordinator to facilitate the connections and exchange among IPBC Country Partners and experts on the provision of technical support for the application of the IPCC Wetlands Supplement.
- IPBC Partners continue to share information with the partnership, directly with Partners or via the Coordinator Team.

ANNEX I – AGENDA

Wednesday, 22 February		
Time	Item	Speakers
09.00-09.30	Registration UNESCO entrance at 7, Place de Fontenoy	
09.30-10.00	Session 1 Opening remarks	<p>Moderator: Kirsten Isensee, Programme Specialist, Ocean Carbon Sources & Sinks, IOC/UNESCO</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary and Assistant Director General, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO • H. E. Ms Megan Anderson, Australian Ambassador to UNESCO, Deputy Head of Mission to France • Christophe Guilhou, Director, Sustainable Development, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs
10.00-11.00	Session 2 An overview of the latest developments in global blue carbon science	<p>Format: Presentations (15 minutes each, including questions)</p> <p>Moderator: Kirsten Isensee, Programme Specialist, Ocean Carbon Sources & Sinks, IOC/UNESCO</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Catherine Lovelock, University of Queensland (remote) • Steve Crooks, Co-chair, The Blue Carbon Initiative (BCI) • Prof. William Austin, Co-chair, Global Ocean Decade Programme for Blue Carbon (GO-BC) • Elle Gillard, Marine Programme, UNESCO World Heritage Centre
11.00-11.30	Coffee break Mall	
11.30-12.30	Session 3 Blue carbon in international frameworks: IPBC Countries' commitments (Part 1)	<p>Format: Presentations (10 minutes each), followed by moderated panel discussion with Countries' representatives</p> <p>Moderator: Prof. Daniel Murdiyarso, Principal Scientist, CIFOR-ICRAF</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisabetta Bonotto, IPBC Project Coordinator, IOC/UNESCO • Loreley Picourt, Executive Director, Ocean and Climate Platform <p>Guiding questions for Countries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What are your Country's current commitments to international frameworks relevant to blue carbon?</i> 2. <i>What are the main challenges in meeting these commitments?</i> 3. <i>What are your Country's blue carbon plans for the next 2 years?</i> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Clark, Director, Blue Carbon and International Partnerships, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water • Frida Sidik, Researcher, Indonesia National Research and Innovation Agency

12.30-14.00	Lunch break	
14.00-15.30	<p>Session 4 Blue carbon in international frameworks: IPBC Countries' commitments (Part 2)</p>	<p>Format: Presentations (10 minutes each), followed by moderated panel discussion with Countries' representatives</p> <p>Moderator: Steven Lutz, Blue Carbon Lead, GRID-Arendal</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jill Hamilton, Director, Blue Climate Strategy, Conservation International • Anelise Zimmer, Principal Associate, Protecting Coastal Wetlands and Coral Reefs, The Pew Charitable Trusts <p>Guiding questions for Countries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What are your Country's current commitments to international frameworks relevant to blue carbon?</i> 2. <i>What are the main challenges in meeting these commitments?</i> 3. <i>What are your Country's blue carbon plans for the next 2 years?</i> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elissa Lalande, Senior Policy Analyst for Climate Change, Seychelles Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment • Jacklyn Rivera Wong, Focal point of Ramsar Convention and Director of National Wetland Program, Ministry of Environment and Energy Costa Rica • Heidi Prislán, Adviser, The Commonwealth Blue Charter
15.30-16.00	Coffee break Mall	
16.00-17.30	<p>Session 5 Launch of the High-level Ambition Group and opportunities for engagement</p>	<p>Format: Remarks, followed by moderated floor discussion</p> <p>Moderators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Romain Chabrol, Biodiversity and Oceans Expert, French Development Agency (AFD) • Chenae Neilson, Assistant Director a/g, Blue Carbon and International Partnerships, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nabil Medaghri Alaoui, Global Ocean Protection, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs • Jill Hamilton, Director, Blue Climate Strategy, Conservation International • Steve Clark, Director, Blue Carbon and International Partnerships, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water • H. E. Ms Ana Elena Pinto Lizano, Permanent Delegate of Costa Rica to UNESCO • Wilfrid Deri, Senior Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Monaco
18.00-20.30	Evening reception UNESCO Restaurant (7 th floor)	
Thursday, 23 February Day 2		
09.30-11.00	Session 6	Format: Presentations (15 minutes each)

	Scene-setting session: Examples of blue carbon projects from around the world and lessons learnt	<p>Moderator: Luz Gil, Climate and Ocean Advisor, The Nature Conservancy</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leah Glass, Technical Advisor, Mangroves and Blue Carbon, Blue Ventures • Dominic Wodehouse, Executive Director, Mangrove Action Project • Steve Crooks, Principal, Wetland Science and Coastal Management, Silvestrum • Prof. Daniel Murdiyarto, Principal Scientist, CIFOR-ICRAF • Steven Lutz, Blue Carbon Lead, GRID-Arendal
11.00-11.30	Coffee break Mall	
11.30-12.30	Session 7 The Blue Carbon High-Quality Principles and Guidance: Overview and next steps	<p>Format: Presentations (10 minutes each), followed by floor discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Beatriz Machado Granziera, Advisor, The Nature Conservancy</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfredo Giron, Programme Lead, Ocean Action Agenda, World Economic Forum • Jen Howard, Vice-president, Blue Carbon Program, Conservation International (remote) • Maddie Millington-Drake, Blue Carbon Researcher, Blue Marine Foundation
12.30-14.00	Lunch break	
14.00-15.00	Session 8 Interactive session: Needs and challenges of blue carbon projects, including risks and opportunities of the carbon markets	<p>Format: Moderated floor discussion</p> <p>Moderators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Schindler Murray, Director, Natural Climate Solutions, Blue Carbon, Rare • Daniel Crockett, Director, Oceans and Climate, Blue Marine Foundation <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What challenges are you facing during different phases of blue carbon project development and/or implementation?</i> 2. <i>How important do you consider the active participation of sovereigns and central governments in a stable future for blue carbon projects?</i> 3. <i>How has the recent carbon markets and standards news impacted your projects or thinking about the blue carbon market opportunity?</i> 4. <i>What will forthcoming adjustments to verra methodologies (the merging of VM33 and VM07) mean for blue carbon projects?</i> 5. <i>Will there be a future where local communities can deploy affordable, out of the box technologies for every stage of MRV?</i>
15.00-15.30	Coffee break Mall	
15.30-17.00	Session 9 Finance session	<p>Format: Panel discussion, followed by floor discussion</p> <p>Moderator:</p>

		<p>Torsten Thiele, Director, Global Ocean Trust</p> <p>Guiding questions for panellists:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>How important is donor and grant support in getting blue carbon projects of the ground and what you consider best practice in that area?</i> 2. <i>How do you see the role of carbon credits, what has been your experience and what would be your suggestions as to how to develop blue carbon markets?</i> 3. <i>What other financing mechanisms have you come across in the blue carbon area and what are your views on those?</i> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melissa Abderrahim, Marine Programme Officer, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) • Lalao Aigrette Ravaoarinosihoarana, National Technical Advisor for Mangroves, Blue Ventures (remote) • Hasna Wihdatun Nikmah, Policy and Stakeholder Engagement Specialist, The World Bank (remote)
17.00-17.15	Wrap-up	
Friday, 24 February		
09.30-10.30	Session 10 Translating international commitments into national policy, regulations and management plans (Part 1)	<p>Format: Moderated panel discussion</p> <p>Moderator: Tom Hickey, Senior Officer, The Pew Charitable Trusts</p> <p>Guiding questions for Countries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What are the policy frameworks relevant to blue carbon in your country?</i> 2. <i>Could you provide one or more examples of case studies of blue carbon projects or action supported by your government in your country?</i> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Clark, Director, Blue Carbon and International Partnerships, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water • Daeun Lee, Deputy Director, Korea Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries • Lisa Schindler Murray, Director, Natural Climate Solutions, Blue Carbon, Rare • Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director, Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)
10.30-11.00	Coffee break Mall	
11.00-12.00	Session 11 Translating international commitments into national policy, regulations and	<p>Format: Moderated panel discussion</p> <p>Guiding questions for Countries:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What are the policy frameworks relevant to blue carbon in your country?</i> 2. <i>Could you provide one or more examples of case studies of blue carbon projects or action supported by your national government in your country?</i>

	management plans (Part 2)	<p>Moderator: Leah Glass, Technical Advisor, Mangroves and Blue Carbon, Blue Ventures</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Crooks, Principal, Wetland Science and Coastal Management, Silvestrum • Stephanie Ockenden, Head of Ocean and Climate Change Policy & International Evidence, UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs • Debra Sungi, A/General Manager MRV & NC, Climate Change and Development Authority of Papua New Guinea
12.00-12.30	Session 12 Wrap-up and Road to COP28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Clark, Director, Blue Carbon and International Partnerships, Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water • Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary and Assistant Director General, IOC/UNESCO

ANNEX II – LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Last Name	First Name	Title	Organisation	Country	Attendance	Email
Abderrahim	Melissa	Marine Programme Officer	International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	Germany/Switzerland	In-person	melissa.abderrahim@iucn.org
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Anderson	Megan	Australian Ambassador to UNESCO and Deputy Head of Mission to France	Permanent Delegation of Australia to UNESCO	Australia	In-person	
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